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To: Rep. Frank Foster, Chair
Rep. Durhal
Members of the Michigan House Standing Committee on Commerce

Michigan's laws programs too many of our citizens for failure:

- First, a student is subject to an out-of-school suspension for chewing a pop tart into the shape of a gun due to "zero tolerance. Boom! They've entered the "school-to-prison pipeline."
- Unable to catch up with their studies, they fail to earn a diploma or GED.
- Unable to find a job, they turn to pushing drugs to earn a living, and become entrapped by the New Jim Crow laws.
- After years behind bars, perhaps in solitary confinement that causes mental illness, they're released into the community with only 30 days of medication but no prescription. Since it takes 6 weeks to get an appointment to see a psychiatrist for a new prescription, those with mental illness are back behind bars as soon as their medication runs out.
- Too often, they are also released without a safe place to live, without transportation, food, personal needs, or identification, making them essentially unemployable since employers are fined \$500 for hiring undocumented persons.
- For ex-offenders who maintain their stability, they work very hard to find a job—any job—but are confronted with the box that dooms their applications to go into the circular file: the box that asks if they've ever been convicted of a felony.

It's not as if there have never been any wrongful convictions as we know from the Innocence Project. Still, they don't even begin to get a chance to explain the circumstances because of the box.

It's not as if any particular conviction means they can't push a broom or operate a machine or build a house; it's just a box that makes it much more likely that once again, to survive, they turn to crime.

Michigan's DOC budget is way too high, at \$2 billion dollars. The percentage of our citizens who are incarcerated is way above average, and so is the average time of sentences. We need to fix all of this, and banning the box is one good beginning.

I urge you to vote to move this bill to the floor. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Norma T. Bauer